

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
 OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:	*
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M/V MASSACHUSETTS FIRE	* Docket No.: DCA-06-MF-016
JUNE 12, 2006	*
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Interview of: WESLEY BABBITT

Boston, MA

Thursday,
 June 15, 2006

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
 notice, at 12:25 p.m.

BEFORE: BRIAN CURTIS
 Investigator-In-Charge

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(12:25 p.m.)

MR. CURTIS: Good afternoon. This is Brian Curtis, Investigator-In-Charge for the *Massachusetts* accident. It's June 15 at 12:25, and we're going to interview Mr. Wesley Babbitt. He was the mate/capt -- mate on the *Massachusetts* the day of the first. And, first, we'll go around the room and identify ourselves as to who is involved in the interview.

I am Brian Curtis of the NTSB.

MR. SPENCE: Jay Spence from Mass. Bay Lines.

MR. LaRUE: Liam LaRue, NTSB.

MR. BABBITT: Wesley Babbitt, mate of the *Massachusetts* from Massachusetts Bay Lines.

LT. CARRUTHERS: Lt. JG Kelly Carruthers from U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Boston.

MR. CURTIS: All right, Wes, we'll get started.

INTERVIEW OF WESLEY BABBITT

BY MR. CURTIS:

Q. If you could just spell your last name for us for the transcriptionist, please.

A. It's Babbitt, B-A-B-B-I-T-T.

Q. Thank you. First, give me your background, your maritime background as far as credentials and what you have for a license.

A. I have a 100-ton master of motor steam near coastal,

1 operating in near coastal waters, with commercial assistance
2 towing endorsement.

3 Q. And education?

4 A. All of my sea time was gained aboard work on
5 Massachusetts Bay Lines' vessels and I took a licensing school
6 course.

7 Q. What school was that?

8 A. Mystic Safe Boating out of Connecticut.

9 Q. Okay. And just to clarify the date of the fire your
10 title on the vessel would have been?

11 A. Mate.

12 Q. Mate, okay. But you are a qualified captain?

13 A. That's correct. Yes.

14 Q. As mate, if you just outline your duties on the
15 vessel.

16 A. Well, as the mate on the 4:00 run we generally would
17 be the helm officer as well and do the entire trip from Rowes
18 Wharf down to Hingham. In the event of an emergency, the
19 master would take over the pilothouse in the helm, and I would
20 go down below and organize the crew and oversee operations on
21 the boat. At other times I would oversee the crew underway
22 when the master would be at the helm.

23 Q. How long have you been with the company?

24 A. Just over nine years. I began in May of 1997.

25 Q. And it was all captain's time?

1 A. No. I acquired my license in May of 2001 and I have
2 been a captain at the company since then. Before that I was a
3 deckhand.

4 Q. And your work schedule now, what do you work for,
5 days on, days off, and your hours of work?

6 A. Well, it's variable. I normally do three days of
7 commuter boat a week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. So that's
8 from 6:00 in the morning till 7:00 p.m. Other days it varies
9 by what we need for charters, you know, what we need for
10 captains on other boats. So how many hours?

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. At least somewhere between maybe 50 and 55.

13 Q. Okay. What I'd like to do is get a -- the three days
14 previous, 72 hours previous to the accident, what your schedule
15 was. In this case it would have been, say, from Friday
16 afternoon on, your sleep, wake cycles and anything out of the
17 ordinary you may have been doing during the weekend. I know
18 it's difficult to go back that far, but basically we're
19 interested in your, you know, fatigue issues or whatnot, your
20 sleep, wake times.

21 A. That's a hard one.

22 Q. And if there's nothing out of the ordinary, just let
23 me know how you typically go to bed and wake up.

24 A. Well, on Friday, I worked commuter boat on Friday. I
25 got off of commuter boat. I had dinner. I was in bed Friday

1 at midnight, maybe 12:30. Saturday I did two cruises on
2 Saturday evening and night.

3 Q. Do you recall roughly what time you were up Saturday
4 morning?

5 A. Yes. Our last cruise pulled in on Sunday morning at
6 2:30 a.m., so I believe we actually left the company at just
7 before 4:00 a.m. So I was probably in bed -- driving home,
8 getting to bed 4:45. Then I woke up that day, had a graduation
9 party that afternoon, and was back in bed, I think, that night
10 about 10:30, 10:00, 10:30. So that was fairly normal. Sunday
11 night to Monday was normal bedtime and get up for me.

12 Q. Do you recall what time you were up Monday?

13 A. Oh, about 4:30. That's my normal get up time, you
14 know. I remember getting up at 4:30 on Monday morning.

15 Q. So nothing out of the ordinary, then? You got your
16 normal rest? You felt normally rested for that time frame?

17 A. Yes. Yes.

18 Q. Your experience with the vessel, had you been on this
19 vessel for an extended period?

20 A. Well, I've been doing commuter runs on the
21 *Massachusetts* for two years now, approximately three days a
22 week, year round. Before that my experience with the boat was
23 from charters and whale watches.

24 Q. Were you on pretty much the same schedule that day
25 with Steve Bodie, the captain, or what -- did you make the same

1 trips that day?

2 A. No. That day I had a cruise on another vessel,
3 *Freedom*. So I worked the *Massachusetts* from her 6:50 a.m. run
4 into Boston, and I left her at 7:30 in Boston, and I rejoined
5 her at 3:45 in the afternoon, when she returned to Rowes Wharf,
6 and then began the 4:00 p.m. trip.

7 Q. And your intentions were to make the remainder of
8 the commuter runs that afternoon?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. I'd like to just -- if you could just run through
11 everything from the time you left the dock, the whole accident
12 scenario, before, during and after the accident, if you could
13 just go ahead -- you know, everything. And if you can, include
14 any times and how long things took to evolve during the
15 accident.

16 A. All right. When I got back on the "Massachusetts," I
17 asked Steve if there were any special restrictions on the
18 engine and he said -- that I should be aware of. He said there
19 were not. I went up to -- I dropped my gear off down below. I
20 went up to the pilothouse, prepared to get us underway, left
21 the dock at 4:00 p.m., began the trip southbound to Hingham.
22 We were off of Spectacle Island, so probably about 4:15.

23 Q. I'm sorry, you were at the helm at this time?

24 A. That's court. Yes, I was operating the vessel. We
25 had an alarm from the port inboard engine, a hot water

1 temperature alarm, something we're fairly cognizant of ringing,
2 the engines hot. So I pulled that engine out of gear, shut it
3 down. And the bartender actually came up to the pilothouse at
4 that time and informed us that we had black smoke coming from
5 the stern.

6 Q. I'm sorry.

7 A. So at that time Steve thought it might be exhaust, so
8 he was going to check the engine room. Shortly after he went
9 down the ladder way from the pilothouse, the port outboard
10 engine's rpm fell shortly, so I also pulled that engine out of
11 gear.

12 Q. Did you secure that engine or just pull it out of
13 gear? Did you stop the engine?

14 A. Yes. I pulled it out of gear. So we passed the --
15 we had passed through the Long Island Bridge at this point.
16 Steve came back up and at that point he asked me to bring the
17 starboard engines down to about 1300 rpm. No, I'm sorry, he
18 asked me to bring the starboard engines down to 1300 rpm before
19 he left the pilothouse. When he came back up is when he first
20 told me that he thought we might have an engine fire.

21 So I pulled the starboard outboard engine out of gear
22 completely and shut it down and maneuvered on the starboard
23 inboard engine. At this point Steve took the helm and he asked
24 me to go prepare the anchor, to drop the anchor. So I went
25 down below and I took two crew members, Peter and Delia, up

1 forward, prepared the anchor to drop, and then we put it over
2 the side. Once the anchor had caught -- now at some point the
3 instruction had been given to the passengers to come up to the
4 second deck as well. That was a part of that.

5 The anchor caught. We secured the starboard inboard
6 engine, as I made my way back to the pilothouse, and he asked
7 me to go down and shut off the emergency fuel shutoff valves.
8 So I proceeded down to the lower deck, pulled the emergency
9 fuel shutoff valves closed. And when I came back up
10 pilothouse, Commander Miller was actually up in the pilothouse
11 assisting with communications with the Coast Guard, and Steve
12 was communicating with the vessel "Laura," who was northbound
13 in the Western Way, to come alongside and take our passengers,
14 so we could evacuate our passengers to her.

15 Went down to the lower deck, prepared to receive the
16 *Laura*, the *Laura's* lines. The generator had shut down as I was
17 on my way downstairs. I heard it die off. Steve instructed
18 Delia to assist the passengers into lifejackets. And the
19 vessel *Laura* came alongside and we tied her up alongside, and
20 then we evacuated the passengers from the upper deck down to
21 the lower deck and across the way into the *Laura*. She then
22 took off with the passengers in the vessel, and we had the
23 Quincy Police boat off the port side. They asked if we needed
24 a fireboat, so I told them that we did. We then collected some
25 fire extinguishers, brought them after in the cabin. I think

1 Steve determined that we shouldn't open the engine room hatches
2 at all. The Quincy Police boat then hailed us and informed us
3 that the Coast Guard was requesting that we evacuate the vessel
4 as well, so we disembarked to the Quincy Police boat.

5 Q. All of you got off at that time?

6 A. That's correct, all four of us. So then we were
7 standing by waiting for the firefighter to come. Steve was in
8 the cabin of the Quincy Police boat communicating with the
9 Coast Guard on the radio. It was about probably about 10
10 minutes total by the time we had gotten the passengers off,
11 then another 5 or 7 minutes before we were instructed off the
12 boat. We stood by with the police boat for about 45 minutes
13 waiting for the firefighter to arrive.

14 Once they arrived, they came alongside the
15 *Massachusetts* and made fast. They requested one person go back
16 to the boat with them to assist with the firefighting.
17 Actually, I believe their request was to operate the bilge
18 pump. So Steve said he would go back, but they didn't want to
19 bring us all alongside. So we were transferred to the Quincy
20 Police boat, the 41 footer. Steve went in the smaller boat
21 back, and we were transferred another 10 or 15 minutes after
22 that to a Coast Guard 41 footer, and that's where the three of
23 us, myself, Peter and Delia, remained for the remainder of the
24 time that we were out there. Steve went aboard the firefighter
25 and assisted the firefighters on the "Mass."

1 Q. And when the *Laura* was alongside, did you communicate
2 with them what their intentions were to do with the passengers,
3 or did they just depart the scene?

4 A. I didn't communicate with them what their intentions
5 were with the passengers. In fact, the *Laura* actually had
6 offered us some fire extinguishers, so they brought over two
7 fire extinguishers for us while we were disembarking the
8 passengers.

9 Q. Did you stay out there while they fought the fire or
10 did the vessel you were on depart after some period?

11 A. No. We remained on the scene. I was told we'd have
12 to remain until Marine Safety was finished with us,
13 interviewing us on the scene, which the Coast Guard 41 footer
14 brought a marine safety officer up. His name was Ray Colichi.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. He met with us very briefly on the 41 footer we were
17 on, and then he was brought to the firefighter and he met with
18 Steve. And he remained there until -- I'm not even sure what
19 time he came back.

20 Q. Do you recall roughly how long it took them to bring
21 the fire under control, or when they made that determination?

22 (Pause.)

23 Q. If you don't, it's okay.

24 A. Yeah, no, not really.

25 Q. Were you on the bridge -- Steve said he had secured

1 the ventilation. Were you up there at that time or were you
2 already down below?

3 A. I don't know to be honest with you. I did not notice
4 if he had secured it before I left the pilothouse, no.

5 Q. Now you had the fuel shutoffs. Those are on the
6 main -- is that the main deck those were on?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. When you trip those, what does that do? Do you know
9 what valves it closes or whatever?

10 A. Yes. In line with the pipes that come right out of
11 the fuel tanks there are two ball valves. They're connected by
12 a wire to the -- up to the main deck, and then they come
13 through the deck to two handles at the lower bar. So you pull
14 the handles and it closes the ball valves.

15 Q. That's shuts all the engines. The generators and
16 everything will lose --

17 A. Yes, because it's both fuel tanks.

18 Q. Bear with me. Were you involved earlier in the day
19 with the repairs to the vessel or weren't you around at that
20 time?

21 A. I was not. After I left the *Massachusetts* at 7:30 in
22 the morning, as I said, I didn't see her again until 3:45 in
23 the afternoon.

24 Q. Saturday apparently it had some issues with --
25 electrical issues with the generators. Did you have any

1 knowledge of any of that, repairs made or any of those issues?

2 A. Not repairs made, no. I did not communicate with the
3 crew from Saturday, either. I did read the note they had left
4 about the portside generator.

5 Q. Are you involved in the maintenance and the oil
6 change on the vessels, on the *Massachusetts*?

7 A. Yes, occasionally.

8 Q. And is there any written procedures or are they
9 basically on the job, you know, just hands on -- are there
10 written procedures for the maintenance to be performed?

11 A. Everything has been on the job.

12 Q. Whose responsibility is it to change the oil? Is it
13 particularly the captain's, the mate's or how was that
14 responsibility for maintenance divvied up for a vessel?

15 A. Well, responsibility-wise it's usually the master,
16 unless the master requests the mate to do it.

17 Q. Generally your relationship with the captain,
18 rapport, a good one?

19 A. Yes, very good.

20 Q. No problems?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Do you have any background or education in regards to
23 engineering and maintenance, or was it, like you say, on the
24 job training?

25 A. On the job training.

1 Q. Some on the drills, any drills conducted -- you as
2 captain would conduct with your crew, what frequency and what
3 you do with them, and if you'd just go through that.

4 A. Sure. All the crew members I would indoctrinate in
5 the operation of the bilge pump and the fire pump, man
6 overboard procedures, where our man overboard apparatus is
7 kept, fire extinguisher locations inside the cabin, moving
8 passengers and the crowd control capacity, donning lifejackets.
9 So all new crew members right away on the vessel -- and drills
10 I would say during the summertime more often, once a month.
11 But in the off months, the off months are less.

12 Q. What would you do for drills? Would you talk your
13 way through them or actually do different drills, or how would
14 you handle those?

15 A. Most drills we would talk our way through, but we
16 have done live drills.

17 Q. And those are logged, your drills?

18 A. Yes, the training manual is kept aboard separately
19 from the ship's log.

20 Q. Okay, separate. The alarms on the bridge, bilge
21 alarms, engine alarms, are those periodically tested or not?
22 How do you handle that? Is there any checks of the alarms?

23 A. Well, the bilge alarms are checked periodically,
24 generally speaking to keep them -- make sure they're
25 functioning for our Coast Guard inspection, our annual safety

1 inspection. The engine alarms themselves, though, I haven't
2 been a part of testing any of them. That's not to say it
3 doesn't happen. Steve generally takes care of that.

4 Q. Did you notice the -- you got the high water
5 temperature alarm on that port inboard engine. Did you notice
6 the gauge, the temperature gauge, was that reading -- what that
7 was reading?

8 A. The temperature gauge in the pilothouse was reading
9 slightly over 180 degrees, maybe 185 or 187.

10 Q. Did you consider that abnormal that -- I mean, was
11 that -- at what temperature would you expect to see?

12 A. That engine at 180 degrees on the gauges in the
13 pilothouse, occasionally inside a hair over 182, maybe.

14 Q. So even when the alarm was off it never -- did you
15 notice that it went up above an inordinate high temperature
16 reading?

17 A. After it had alarmed and even after I had shut it
18 off, the temperature continued to climb on that engine, on the
19 gauge, yes.

20 Q. Do you recall how high it got?

21 A. Well, the last I saw it it was over 200.

22 Q. How do you account for how many passengers you have
23 onboard for any given trip?

24 A. While they're boarding a crew member uses a counter,
25 a counting device, to count every person that steps on the

1 boat, besides crew. Crew is kept separately in the log. And
2 that day I believe we had 65 passengers and 4 crew members.

3 Q. Is that a fairly typical passenger load for the
4 commuter or does it -- or, what is the typical load, I guess I
5 would ask?

6 A. Somewhere between 40 and 70 on that trip is the norm.

7 Q. Are you ever at capacity for a commuter trip?

8 A. Not on normal trips, and I can't say that I've ever
9 seen it at capacity for any trip. We carry heavier loads if
10 we're doing another trip, covering another boat, which is
11 infrequent.

12 Q. So typically 40 to 70, in there somewhere, where you
13 would expect it?

14 A. On that particular trip, yes.

15 Q. Just once again, I'm not sure we got it before. The
16 notification to the authorities, the commander was onboard. I
17 guess he handled the communications with the Coast Guard?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And as far as notifying the fire department, that
20 went through the Quincy --

21 A. The Quincy Police Department, yes.

22 Q. What about the response time of the fire department,
23 did you think that was what you would have expected or longer,
24 or what did you think there? I noticed you said it was like 45
25 minutes, or something like that.

1 A. Yeah, I felt that was a long time, but there again
2 they had to load up the firefighters from Boston and make their
3 way southbound. The Quincy Police Department actually made
4 mention of the fact that they have -- they had a dewatering
5 pump on there, a 41 footer, that they're not allowed to use for
6 firefighting capability, so they couldn't assist us with it.

7 Q. You're pre-departure briefings for the passengers,
8 would you just go through what that consisted of and who would
9 give it and how you would convey it to the passengers.

10 A. Oh, whoever the helm officer is for the trip would
11 normally give the public safety announcement. And the public
12 safety announcement would cover the emergency equipment on the
13 boat, the location of it, to follow the instructions of the
14 crew in the event of an emergency.

15 Q. Is this with the PA system?

16 A. Yes, on both inner cabins and both external decks,
17 the bow and stern.

18 Q. Now do the passengers usually tend to stay on the
19 lower deck, the upper deck? What is typically where they tend
20 to congregate?

21 A. Well, sort of an even mix, I guess. Most of the
22 passengers were on the upper deck for that trip, the outer
23 decks, and the bar is located on the second deck so they tend
24 to congregate around there. But quite a few passengers prefer
25 to have their own booths down on the lower decks.

1 Q. And all captains are familiar with the start and stop
2 procedures for the engines and generator, so any one of you
3 could have gone down and, say, parallel a generator or start
4 and stop to check an engine?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. So the deckhands, the familiarity down there would be
7 limited to checking?

8 A. Checking the engine room for excessive water, smoke,
9 engine temperatures. The gauge is right in the engine room.

10 Q. The deckhands you had on that day, the adequacy and
11 abilities?

12 A. Well, Peter has been on the boat actually since the
13 beginning of last fall. He's very capable for assisting with
14 passengers, with the crowd control, with tying up the *Laura*.
15 Delia had only been on a few weeks, but she's been a very fast
16 learner and she was very capable that day assisting with the
17 PFDs.

18 Q. They seemed to know their responsibilities during the
19 emergency as directed?

20 A. Once they were directed, yes. And I did neglect the
21 fact that Steve did give an announcement over the public
22 address system that he believed there was a fire in the engine
23 room, once we had all the passengers on the upper deck and we
24 were anchored.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. As we were anchoring, actually, he made the
2 announcement.

3 MR. CURTIS: Thanks, Wes. I'll pass the questioning
4 along to Jay.

5 MR. SPENCE: I'm all set.

6 MR. CURTIS: Liam?

7 BY MR. LaRUE:

8 Q. Liam LaRue. You said the first indication you had
9 that something was wrong was when you had the high water alarm?

10 A. High water temperature.

11 Q. Or, the high water temperature alarm?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And then the bartender came up immediately following
14 that and said there was black smoke?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. And that was coming from where?

17 A. From the stack. It was just following behind us. We
18 had no indication where it was coming from at the time.

19 Q. Okay. You mentioned you brought some fire
20 extinguishers out to the main deck after the passengers
21 evacuated?

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. Did you discharge any of the fire extinguishers?

24 A. We did not.

25 Q. Okay. And those are -- where are the fire

1 extinguishers located normally?

2 A. Well, the closest ones on that main deck, there's a
3 fire extinguisher very close to the portside engine room door.
4 There's another fire extinguisher located right at the lower
5 bar. And the third fire extinguisher that I collected was at
6 the base of the stairs to the Silver Room, which is a lower
7 compartment.

8 Q. Okay. When you do your drills and training, can you
9 kind of go step by step through the procedures that you would
10 follow in case of a fire and what you would teach to the
11 captains and deckhands.

12 A. Well, for a fire in the cabin, such as -- I guess a
13 trash barrel fire would be the most common, you'd move all the
14 passengers away to the upper deck, collect fire extinguishers,
15 and have the passenger begin donning life vests. So one crew
16 member would be assigned to that and one crew member would be
17 down below collecting the fire extinguishers and discharge them
18 as necessary to fight the fire.

19 A galley fire would be handled similarly. Engine
20 room fires, we would secure the engine room blowers, close the
21 fire doors, which are located at the base of the stairs in the
22 main cabin, and close the --

23 Q. You talked about the training that new crew
24 members -- whose responsibility was it to train them and then
25 how do you know that each crew member has been trained once

1 they've gotten their -- is that recorded anywhere?

2 A. Not specifically. We record the training. But the
3 responsibility lies with whatever captain is there the day that
4 we do the training. And to make sure that they're capable of
5 doing it, we usually have them go through the steps of the
6 procedure back to us.

7 Q. Okay. Was the number of passengers you had onboard
8 on Monday, was that a light load, a heavy load, a normal day,
9 average?

10 A. It was about average, yes.

11 Q. And I guess if you could give me a little bit more
12 detail about what the other deckhands kind of were doing during
13 the emergency. You were driving the boat, obviously?

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. And then you went down and worked with the anchor.
16 Now what was everybody doing as the *Laura* was coming up?

17 A. Well, they weren't coming -- at that point they
18 weren't coming, yet. So I had them come with me to assist
19 getting the anchor heaved up to the gunnels second deck, so
20 that we could push it over the side. And I paid out some
21 anchor line now. So we had Delia keeping the people away, the
22 passengers away, and Peter was assisting me with the anchor
23 during that portion. During the actual trip itself, Delia
24 would have been the bartender at the bar. I was driving.
25 Steve was up in the pilothouse as well. And Peter, I believe,

1 was down below. I don't know if he was on the main deck, or
2 the second deck.

3 Q. Who was helping out when the *Laura* came alongside?

4 A. That was myself and Peter. And Steve actually came
5 down as well, as they came alongside. And Delia was instructed
6 to remain with the crowd for crowd control until we were ready
7 to bring them down to the main cabin to get them straight
8 across to the *Laura*.

9 Q. Any problem with the passengers onboard? How were
10 they handling all the excitement?

11 A. Well, the passengers actually were very calm. They
12 did what they were instructed. Nobody complained of anything.
13 Nobody seemed frightened.

14 Q. You just kept everybody clear of all the smoke?

15 A. As much as we could, yeah.

16 MR. LaRUE: All right, that's all I've got.

17 BY LT. CARRUTHERS:

18 Q. All right, I hope this didn't get covered. The
19 bartender came up, when both you and Steve were in the
20 pilothouse?

21 A. That's correct, yes.

22 Q. And the lifejackets, you heard Steve tell Delia to
23 have the passengers put lifejackets on?

24 A. I didn't hear that. I heard him instruct her to get
25 the lifejackets out, and then he went up to the second deck

1 with her. So I was down in the main cabin.

2 Q. You were in the main cabin when --

3 A. Yes. I was already down in the main cabin.

4 Q. And he was where?

5 A. In the upper cabin. He started out in the lower
6 cabin with me, and then he had gone upstairs.

7 Q. Can you walk me through that one again, because I'm a
8 little lost as to when the passengers put the lifejackets on.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Were you anchored at this
10 time?

11 MR. BABBITT: We were already anchored, yes. And all
12 the passengers were already on the second deck. I went down
13 below to secure the fuel shutoff valves. When I came back up,
14 Steve was communicating with the *Laura* to come alongside. So I
15 went down below and organized some fendering on the side of the
16 boat for the *Laura* to come alongside and to receive our lines.
17 So Peter and myself were on the lower deck. Now Steve had come
18 down to the lower deck to make sure that the fendering was
19 appropriate for the *Laura*.

20 BY LT. CARRUTHERS:

21 Q. Were you anchored at that time?

22 A. We were, yes. And the generator had shut off. We
23 had nothing running.

24 Q. During any of those times going up and down the
25 stairs, you didn't notice passengers with lifejackets on?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay. So then you're on the lower deck doing lines?

3 A. Yes. Well, still doing fenders when I heard him give
4 the instruction to Delia to get the passengers to use
5 lifejackets. So she proceeded to get the lifejackets out of
6 the lockers upstairs. I could see that much from where I was.

7 Q. Did you see all the passengers cross over?

8 A. Um-hum. Yes.

9 Q. Were they all wearing lifejackets at that time?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay, so they were able to be dispersed?

12 A. Yes. I actually -- I was assisting, between the two
13 of us, the passengers get off, and they all had their
14 lifejackets on.

15 Q. Okay. You said that Steve returned to the fireboat
16 because they needed to operate the bilge pump?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Would you have had power to the bilge pump?

19 A. No.

20 Q. But they specifically asked for someone to run the
21 bilge pump?

22 A. Yes. They thought it would be a good idea to pump
23 the bilge before they started adding water, but it would have
24 been physically impossible even if there was power. Because
25 the bilge systems operated all the way forward in the engine

1 room. So you'd have to get through the entire engine room to
2 get there, and we still hadn't -- we didn't have any hatches
3 open at that time.

4 Q. There's nothing in the pilothouse? Okay. So you
5 actually have to go down manually and pull up the switch in the
6 engine room?

7 A. Yes. Well, it's not pulling up the switch. It's the
8 activation switch for the bilge pump system, which was on the
9 forward bulkhead. For the fire pump -- there's two pumps. One
10 is left set up as a bilge pump and one is left set up as a fire
11 pump. The starboard side one would be the bilge pump. The
12 portside one would be fire pump, also on the starboard side.

13 LT. CARRUTHERS: Okay.

14 BY MR. CURTIS:

15 Q. Those switches in the fire pumps and bilge pumps,
16 those are directly adjacent to the pump, then, right near them?

17 A. Oh, yes. They're right above them on the bulkhead.

18 Q. Okay, and the same with the bilge pump. It was at
19 the pump?

20 A. Yes. Standing at the pump it's right on the
21 bulkhead.

22 MR. CURTIS: Jay?

23 BY MR. SPENCE:

24 Q. My only question would be to Wesley, are the fire and
25 bilge pumps labeled?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Are they labeled how to be operated?

3 A. Yes. There's clear labeling right on the switches as
4 to which one is which, and we had placards delineating which
5 valves needed to be opened to operate the pump as either a
6 bilge pump or a fire pump. Either pump could be used as either
7 as well, the configuration of the valves.

8 Q. And were the valves labeled?

9 A. Yes. There is two-inch lettering right on the
10 valves.

11 MR. SPENCE: That's all.

12 BY MR. LaRUE:

13 Q. Liam LaRue. One more question about what, if any --
14 or when you made calls either to the Coast Guard -- I think you
15 may have mentioned you made some calls out to the Coast Guard
16 on the VHF?

17 A. I didn't. Steve -- Steve attempted to. I wasn't in
18 the pilothouse during that time. When I had returned,
19 Commander Miller was in the pilothouse communicating with the
20 Coast Guard. Steve was actually asking him to liaison with the
21 Coast Guard.

22 Q. On VHF?

23 A. On his own cell phone. And it was recounted to me
24 later that we were unable to communicate with the Coast Guard
25 on the radio. Actually, another crew from another boat had

1 heard us hail the Coast Guard and no response.

2 Q. Did you try to call anybody else? Did you try to
3 call the fire department at all or --

4 A. Not personally, no.

5 Q. Do you know if anybody did or Steve did?

6 A. I don't.

7 MR. LaRUE: All right. Good to go.

8 LT. CARRUTHERS: All set.

9 BY MR. CURTIS:

10 Q. Brian Curtis, one more time. So you didn't yourself
11 call -- attempt to call the Coast Guard initially?

12 A. I did not, no. Because when -- once Steve returned
13 to the pilothouse with the thought that it was an engine room
14 fire, he took over the pilothouse himself and the helm..

15 Q. And you didn't see him attempt to call the Coast
16 Guard? He was communicating with the commander?

17 A. I did see him communicating with the commander when
18 he came up to the pilothouse, but I didn't actually witness the
19 call on the VHF to the Coast Guard.

20 BY LT. CARRUTHERS:

21 Q. Lt. Carruthers. When Steve told you that he thought
22 there was an engine room fire and he told you to shut down the
23 engines, did he give you any further instruction? He left to
24 go check on the fire?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. When was the next time you had contact with him?

2 A. Well, he didn't know it was a fire when he left to
3 check.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. So when he returned with the suspicion that it was an
6 engine room fire is when we secured the -- he instructed me to
7 secure the starboard outboard engine.

8 Q. And he did that physically by being in the pilothouse
9 with you?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. So he came -- went downstairs, came all the way back
12 to the pilothouse to tell you?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And then you --

15 A. I shut down the starboard -- I clutched the starboard
16 outboard out of gear, shut it down, and then we switched
17 positions and he took over the helm.

18 Q. And then you left to go --

19 A. To go prepare the anchor.

20 LT. CARRUTHERS: Okay.

21 MR. CURTIS: Wes, I guess that's all we have. It's
22 13:15. I appreciate you coming in today. This ends the
23 interview with Wes Babbitt.

24 (Whereupon, at 1:15 p.m., the interview in the above-
25 entitled matter was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: M/V Massachusetts Fire
 June 12, 2006
 Interview of Wesley Babbitt

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-06-MF-016

PLACE: Boston, MA

DATE: June 15, 2006

was held according to the record, and that this is the
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Phyllis Jarvis
Transcriber